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# Kelly McParland: Why the climate change crusade has failed

*While the science may be legitimate, the politicians and activists offer little reason to deserve our trust*

Kelly McParland

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Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. PHOTO BY PATRICK DOYLE /Reuters

The world is awash in reports of catastrophes attributed to climate change. Floods in Europe. Wildfires up and down the West Coast. Heat domes across the continent. Smoke emergencies fouling the air. All the warnings about greenhouse gas emissions, and still ... this.

Why won't we listen? Ezra Klein, a thoughtful New York Times columnist, addresses that issue. The headline reads: "It Seems Odd That We Would Just Let The World Burn." He examines a new book, "How to Blow up a Pipeline," by a writer named Andreas Malm who complains that decades of climate activism haven't produced the desired revolution, so it's time to start blowing things up. Like pipelines.

You can read the column and the book for yourself, but what jumps out at me is how anyone could have trouble understanding why the climate change crusade has failed. The reason seems so obvious.

It's not because the world is full of deniers and doubters who reject the science and won't lift a finger to prevent a catastrophe. Without having done a massive survey of the world's population, I'm pretty sure

most reasonable people accept that human activity has had a dramatic impact on the environment, and we're regularly experiencing the consequences.

What they do doubt is the ability of those supposedly in the know — the politicians, activists, campaigners and professional doom merchants — to identify workable and practical solutions and put them into effect. They don't think the people in charge know what they're doing. They also don't have much trust in a media that seems addicted to hysteria and shockingly immune to ideas they don't hold. Years of experience support their doubts.

Governments and climate activists have had 30 years since the 1992 UN gathering in Brazil launched the modern climate change crusade. Since then eager leaders at federal, provincial, state and global levels have met regularly, commissioned studies and issued clarion calls for action. They've lectured, exhorted, declared, insisted, preached and advocated. Summits have been held, fleets of jets and squadrons of limousines have ferried ministers, presidents, chancellors, princes and billionaires to posh locations where communiques were debated and approved. They've spent billions — perhaps trillions — on projects. And to what effect? According to the U.S. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Association (NOAA), by 2019 the warming influence of human-produced greenhouse gases had risen by 45 per cent over 1990. So what's the remedy? Judging by those same leaders (to use the term loosely), even harsher methods are required if we want to stop floods, fires and hurricanes from engulfing the planet.

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People take a look at this sorry history and find it easy to conclude that while the science may be legitimate, the politicians and activists offer little reason to deserve our trust. The projects they championed obviously didn't work, probably because they were poorly conceived, badly thought out and rushed into place with an eye on photo ops and self-aggrandizement rather than the potential for success.

California is a good example. There may not be a more woke place on Earth than the largest American state. It votes overwhelmingly for Democrats, hosts a celebrity culture eager to champion anything deemed “progressive” and has the wealth and population to wield real clout. Yet it persists in letting people build homes in dried-out forest areas where fire is a constant danger, and complains about drought while devoting oceans of water to almond farms and vineyards owned by the same celebrities who urge lesser souls to lower their carbon “footprint.” The biggest wildfire in the state's history wasn't caused by climate change; forestry officials believe it likely resulted from lightning, arson or “smoking

activities.” A massive blaze that destroyed homes and vineyards last year was caused by transmission lines from Pacific Gas and Electric, the state utility, whose network was so decrepit it was forced into bankruptcy.

Most individuals have a limited capacity to bring big change to their lives. They can get better insulation, newer windows, drive lower-emission cars (or buy electric ones if they can afford it), do laundry during off-peak hours, eat less meat and pay carbon taxes. They can’t stop China from building more coal plants or pushing consumption to record levels. They can’t snap their fingers and produce a world less dependent on oil and gas.

The big challenge belongs to government, and the chief concerns are emissions from agriculture and industrial activities. The trick is to figure out how to cut emissions from those sources without crippling the economies they underpin. So far, no one has found the key. Killing all the cows and sheep, shutting down (or blowing up) pipelines and banning oil production might work, but nobody outside the most demented extremists seriously wants to try. We had a test run with the COVID pandemic, which produced a record drop in emissions thanks to the virtual shuttering of normal life. Lockdowns and border restrictions caused air and land transport to plummet. Millions of jobs were lost, businesses went bankrupt, social problems proliferated. Hands up everyone who wants to do it all again in the name of lower emissions.

The environmental advocacy organization ecojustice notes that Canada has missed every government-set emissions target for 30 years. Two thirds of that period we’ve been ruled by Liberal governments seized with eco righteousness. Official figures from Ottawa show Canada missed reduction targets in 2020, and is likely to substantially miss those set for 2030. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s inability to meet his emission promises is matched only by his .000 batting average on hitting his budget deficit targets. Yet he no doubt intends to campaign on both, boasting of a record voters seem unable to notice is a hollow chamber echoing in emptiness.

If the world is burning it’s the fault of blundering politicians and an activist industry that’s addicted to grandstanding and rhetoric. The professions are similar: neither requires previous experience, noteworthy credentials or evidence of skill. In politics you generally have to get elected to something at some point; activism doesn’t even require that. Together they’ve been leading the climate parade in aimless circles for decades, forever exhorting the crowd to join in. You have to wonder why they still suppose people would take them seriously.

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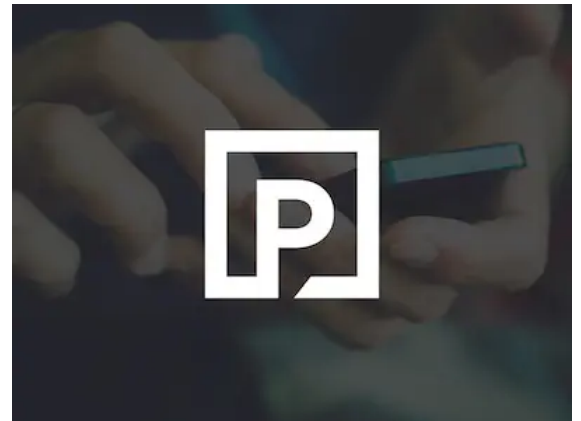
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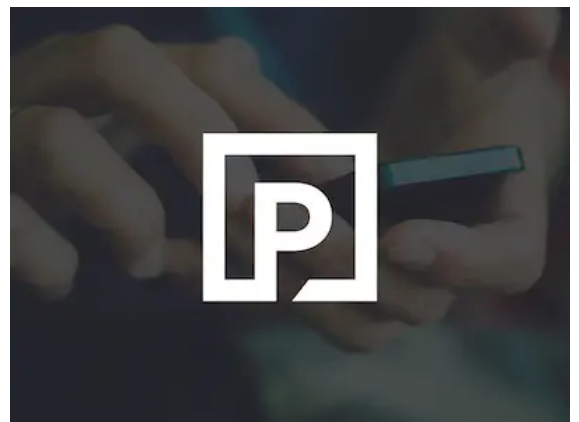
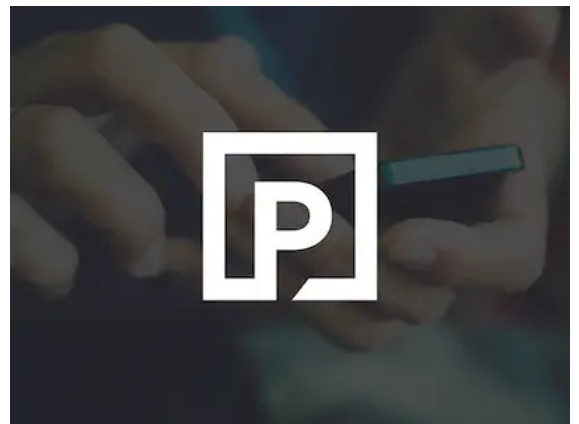
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